



General Session Seven

Panel Materials

Making Students' College Aspirations a Reality: Instituting Critical Elements of a College-Going Culture

Moderator:
Jennifer Lerner

Panelists:
Charlene Jordan
Jenny Nagaoka

Sponsored by:
U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
High School Programs Group



About our Panelists

General Session Seven

Making Students' College Aspirations a Reality: Instituting Critical Elements of a College-Going Culture

Jennifer Brown Lerner, Moderator. Ms. Lerner, Senior Program Associate for the American Youth Policy Forum, identifies and researches issues, policies, and programs for AYPF's learning events and publications. Currently, she is organizing a series of field trips for local leaders on the issues of dropout recovery and cross-system collaboration. She has also co-authored a compendium on best practices in secondary-post secondary learning options entitled *The College Ladder: Linking Secondary and Postsecondary Education for Success for All*. Jennifer has also worked as a classroom teacher and development officer for a number of independent schools in the Boston area.

Jenny Nagaoka. Ms. Nagaoka is the Project Director of the Chicago Postsecondary Transition Project, a project of the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago. She will be presenting results from the project's recent report, *From High School to the Future: Potholes on the Road to College*. This report examined how well Chicago students participated in the college search and application process and what barriers they faced in translating their aspirations into college attainment. In the report, it was found that low access to social capital (norms, information, and clear structures of support) meant that many CPS students had difficulty managing the process of identifying colleges that match their qualifications and interests and were not taking the steps to effectively apply to colleges and for financial aid. A significant finding was that low levels of four-year college enrollment among qualified students were occurring because so many students who hoped to obtain four-year degrees did not even apply. Those students who did apply and were accepted often did not enroll. Applying for financial aid was the most significant predictor of whether students who were accepted actually enrolled, particularly for the most highly qualified students.

Charlene Jordan. Dr. Jordan, Senior Director for School Redesign for NYC schools, is responsible for leading and coordinating the transformation of 19 large high schools serving over 38,000 students in 115 SLCs. Along with Associate Director Aaron Turner, Dr. Jordan has spent the last year standardizing SLC best practices and effective elements to ensure consistency and coherence across schools. Using the *Framework for SLCs in NYC* and the SLC Implementation Rubric to align professional development for principals, administrators, teacher leaders, and guidance counselors, schools in NYC are beginning to prove successful in attendance and credit accumulation. Dr. Jordan will outline the scaffolded approach that SLC schools are utilizing to build a college bound culture beginning in the ninth grade. In addition to specific SLC and whole school strategies in grades 9-12, she will discuss strategic changes schools are making in rethinking the role and structure of guidance, as well as the challenges faced in leveraging SLCs as the change agent in building a college bound culture. One of the primary goals of the Office of School Redesign over the next two years is to work closely with SLC schools to dramatically increase the percentage of students graduating from high school and attending college.



Panelists Materials

Charlene Jordan, New York City Department of Education

How SLCs Contribute to Fostering a College Bound Culture

There are 19 large high schools in New York City that are in various phases of restructuring into small learning communities. Over the past year, our work has focused on standardizing practice across the 115 SLCs, and one of the primary areas of emphasis has been leveraging SLCs to foster a college bound culture beginning in the ninth grade.

Specific activities/experiences of each grade:

Grade 9

- Advisory program begins. While the emphasis is on helping students develop the skills to be successful in school – organization, note taking, research, etc. – there are also activities focused on beginning to help students think about realistic career goals – the education and career connection.
- SLC group meetings – led by Guidance Counselors – get students focused on setting college and career goals and understanding more about the *road to college*. Some schools enlist school staff – particularly bilingual staff – to tell their story in order to make the process more realistic for students, particularly English Language Learners.
- Partnerships with community organizations that encourage college culture are invited in to work with 9th graders (Learning Leaders is a good example).

Grade 10

- Students take PSAT test and preparatory classes are offered – after school and on Saturday.
- College Fairs are held in the evening – parent outreach, through SLCs, to encourage attendance.
- English classes are used to do some reading about college experience – Guidance staff facilitates conversations/questions/preparation for visits.
- SLCs plan trips to local colleges.
- Information sessions about College Now/dual pathways begin.

Grade 11

- PSAT/SAT tests and preparation – ensure that your school is a testing site for SAT (encourages students to be comfortable in a setting that is familiar).
- SLC English classes work on college essays with students.
- SLCs plan more extensive college trips – out of immediate urban area, often include overnight trips. Parents are invited to serve as chaperones.
- Evening College Fairs continue.
- Counselors conduct several college workshops within SLCs: focus on completing college applications, financial aid workshops, etc. Evening parent workshops on the same topics are held in the fall and in the spring.
- School prepares and distributes college guide at end of 11th grade.

Grade 12

- Complete post secondary planning guide with all students.

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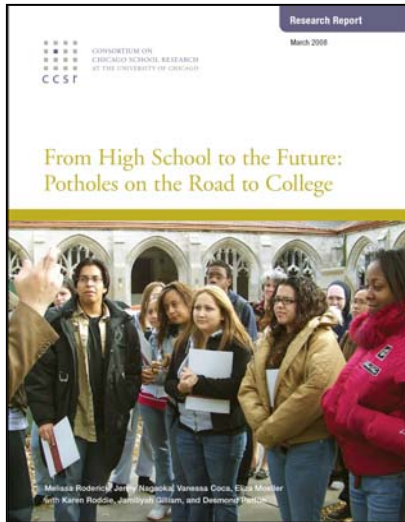


- Display all college acceptance letters on bulletin boards in hallways within SLCs.
- Prepare posters listing all schools students were accepted to and post them in prominent places in the building where underclassmen and visitors will see them.
- Invite alumni in for a breakfast or lunch around holiday season and have them conduct panels/ small group conversations so that students can get their questions asked and answered.

Full School Activities

- Decorate the counselors' offices in SLCs with college posters and pennants.
- College Day – all staff wear their alumni sweatshirts/t-shirts/hats and students are encouraged to ask questions about the staff's college experiences.
- AP week – students can sign up to "sit in" to various AP courses prior to registering for them so they can get an understanding of the rigor and workload. Some schools have been able to do similar processes with College Now courses.
- Beginning of the year mailing to parents will include a welcome letter from the College Office with key dates and upcoming events.
- All guidance counselors receive professional development from college advisor and are encouraged to visit colleges.

<http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/SpecialPrograms/SLC/default.htm>



Making Students' College Aspirations a Reality: Instituting Critical Elements of a College-Going Culture

Jenny Nagaoka

Co-authors Melissa Roderick, Vanessa Coca, and Eliza Moeller

August 15, 2008

**Presentation to the SLC Project Directors Meeting
Arlington, VA**



***Report available at
<http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/potholes>***

Meeting a new challenge: Chicago Public Schools Postsecondary Department and the Consortium on Chicago School Research's Project

Nationwide we've seen dramatic increases in the proportion of students aspiring to college:

- In 1980, 41 percent of 10th graders aspired to attain a four-year degree.
- By 2002, nearly 80 percent of all 10th graders aspired to complete a four-year degree.

In Chicago, over 83 percent of 2005 12th graders aspired to attain at least a four-year degree.

- Of these students, less than half were enrolled in a four-year college the fall after graduation.

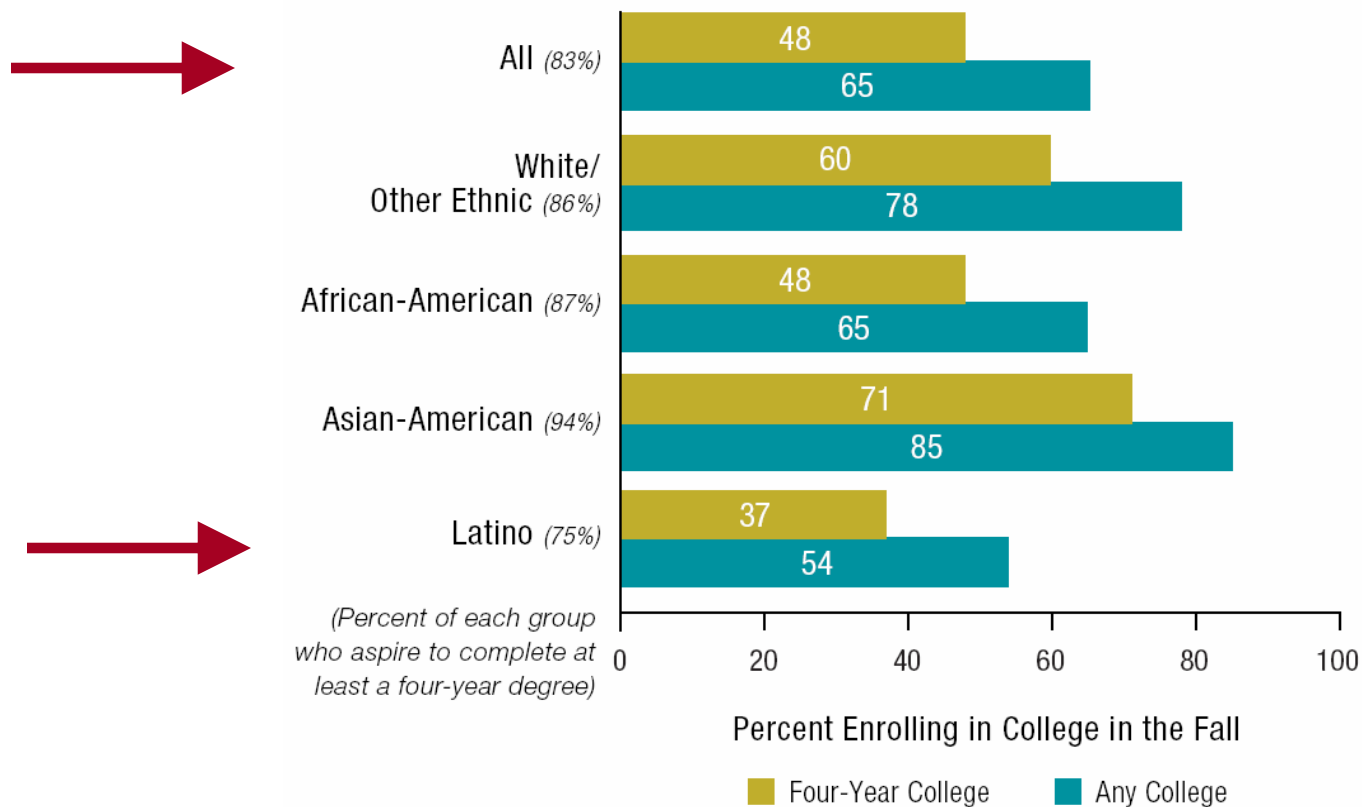


From High School to the Future: Potholes on the Road to College (2008)
Roderick, Nagaoka, Coca, and Moeller

FIGURE 3

Eighty-three percent of CPS graduates hope to complete at least a four-year college degree, but fewer than half of these graduates enroll in a four-year college in the fall

Of graduates who aspire to complete at least a four-year degree:

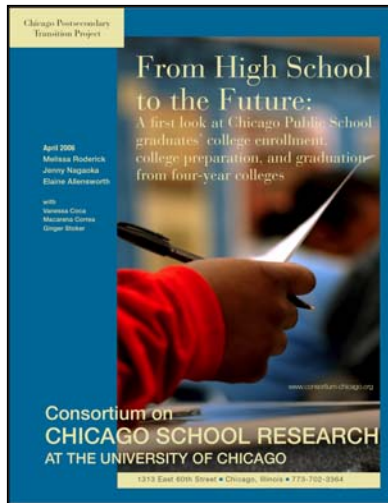


Data sources

- **Quantitative: CPS Postsecondary Tracking System (A close look at 2005 graduates)**
 - Complete high school transcripts
 - Test score history, including ACT scores of all graduates
 - Senior Exit Questionnaire
 - 2005 Consortium senior surveys and high school teacher surveys
 - NSC data with corrections for schools not participating in NSC
- **Qualitative: A longitudinal study of 105 students in three high schools (class of 2006)**
 - Students interviewed 2 times junior year, 3 times senior year– followed through this fall (two years post high school).
 - All students coded for main patterns of application and enrollment. Qualitative cases and thematic analysis used in the report.

Why do so many Chicago students who aspire to complete a four-year degree not enroll in college?

- **Human capital explanations**
 - Constrained access due to qualifications
- **Social capital explanations**
 - Constrained participation in college search and difficulty navigating the application process
- **Financial capital explanations**
 - Constrained access because of a lack of financial resources and not leveraging financial aid



**From high school to the future: A first look
at Chicago Public School graduates'
college enrollment, college preparation,
and graduation from four-year college
Roderick, Nagaoka, and Allensworth**

Increasing qualifications is the single most important strategy for improving graduates' likelihood of enrolling in four-year and more selective colleges, and ultimately their likelihood of attaining a degree.

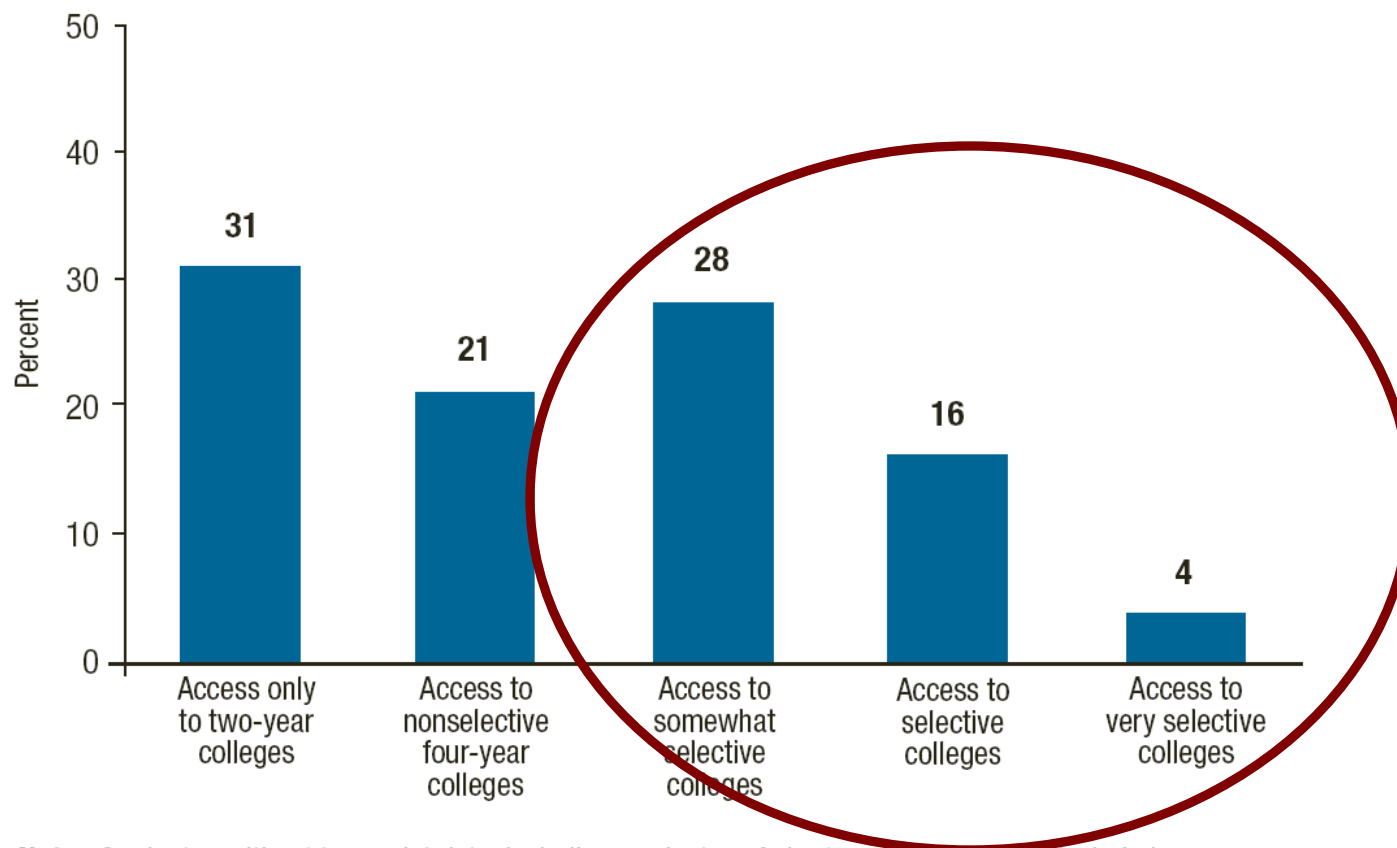


Report available at <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu>

Figure 2-9

About 20 percent of CPS graduates had GPAs and ACT scores that gave them access to selective or very selective colleges

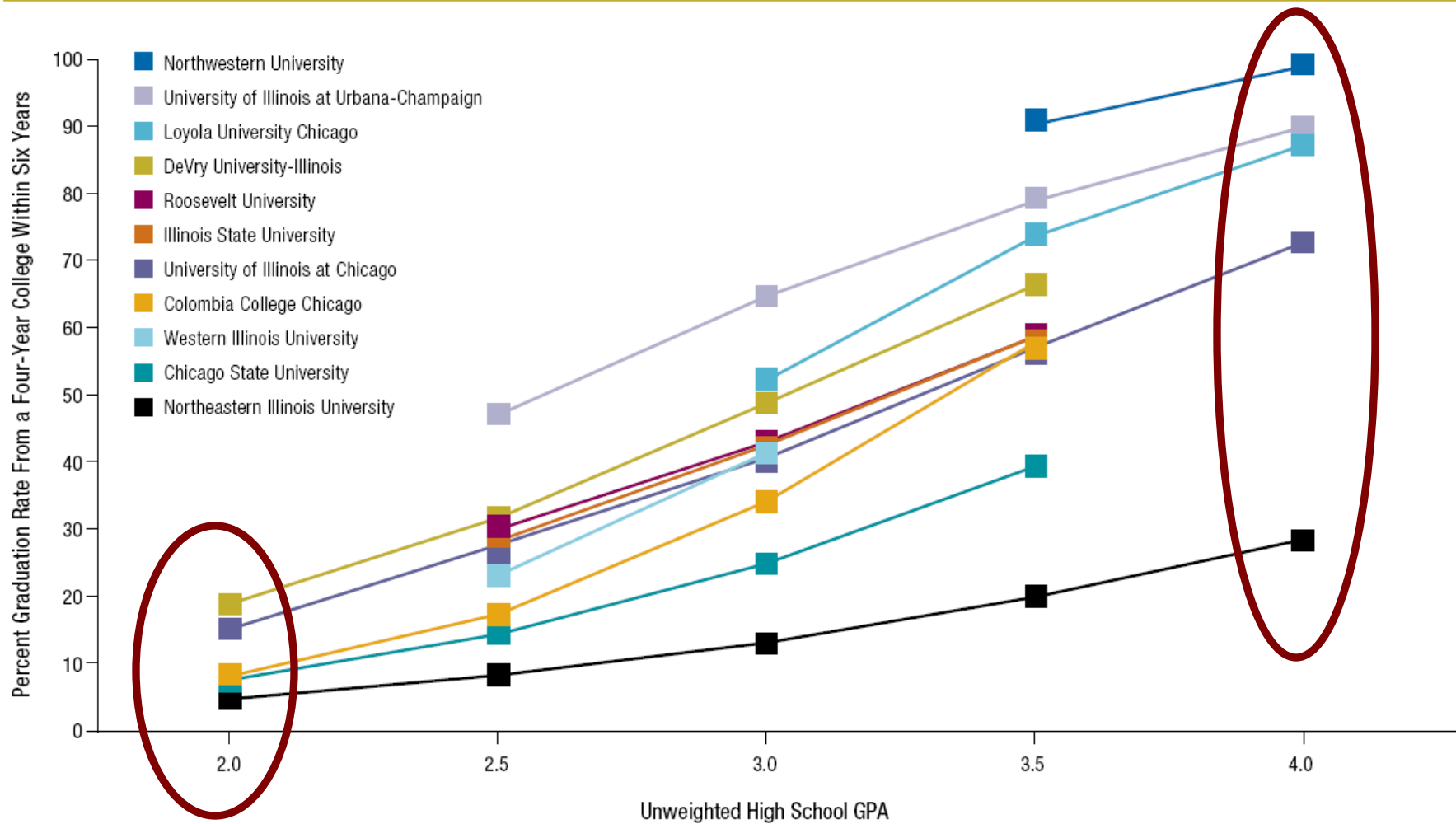
CPS graduates' access to two-year and four-year colleges of varying selectivity

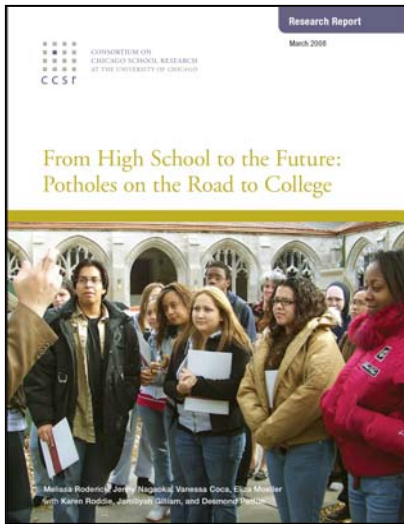


Note: Graduates without transcript data, including graduates of charter schools, are not included.

FIGURE 35.

College graduation rates by unweighted high school GPA for popular Illinois colleges





Potholes report: What else explains why students do not enroll in four-year colleges?

Roderick, Nagaoka, Coca, and Moeller

- 1. Where do students struggle on the road to college and what can schools do to help?*
- 2. Are students identifying and applying to colleges that meet their levels of qualifications?*

FIGURE 10

Tracking CPS graduates' steps towards college enrollment

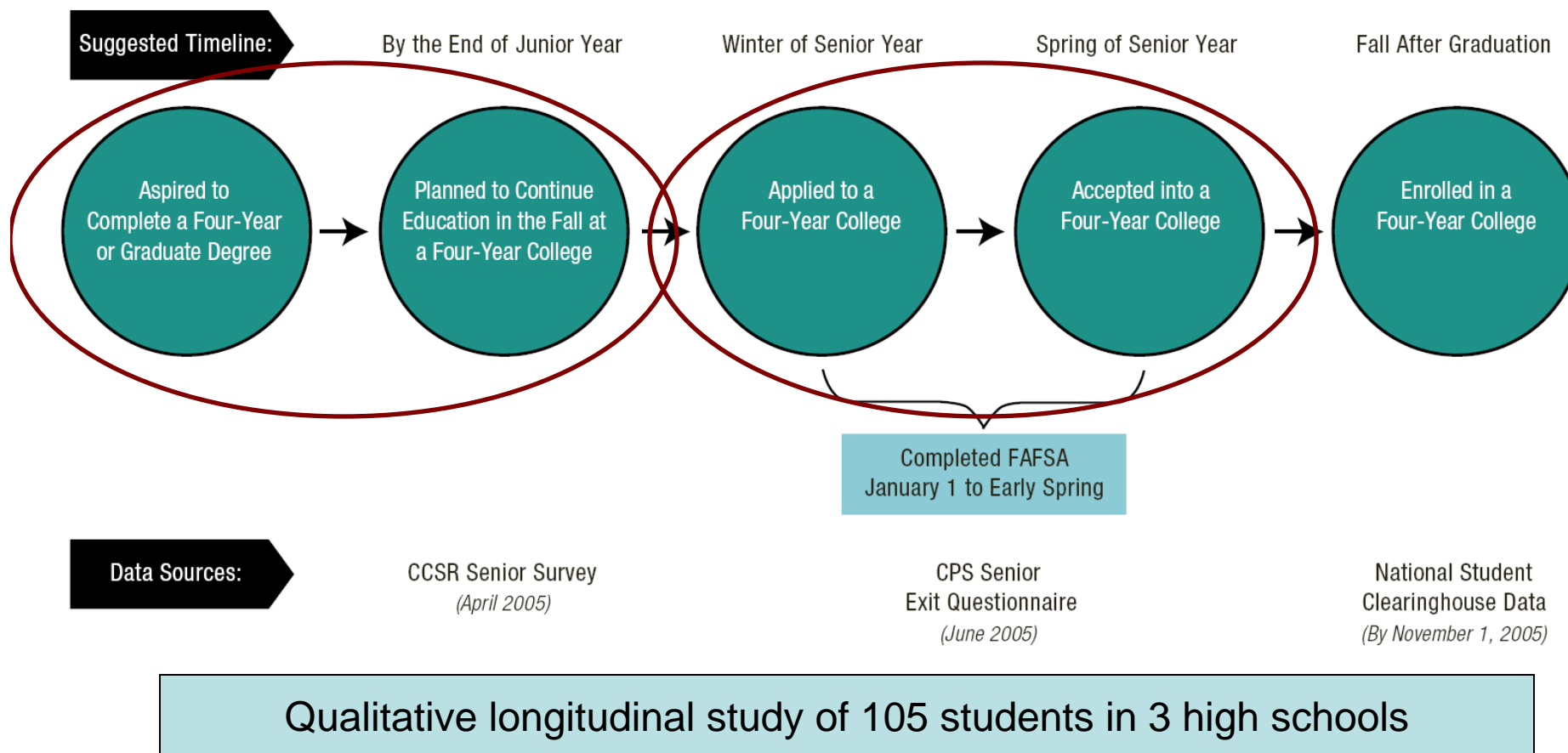


FIGURE 11

Only 41 percent of CPS graduates who aspired to complete a four-year degree took these steps and enrolled in a four-year college in the fall after graduation—an additional 9 percent enrolled in college without taking these steps

Tracking students through the steps to college enrollment:

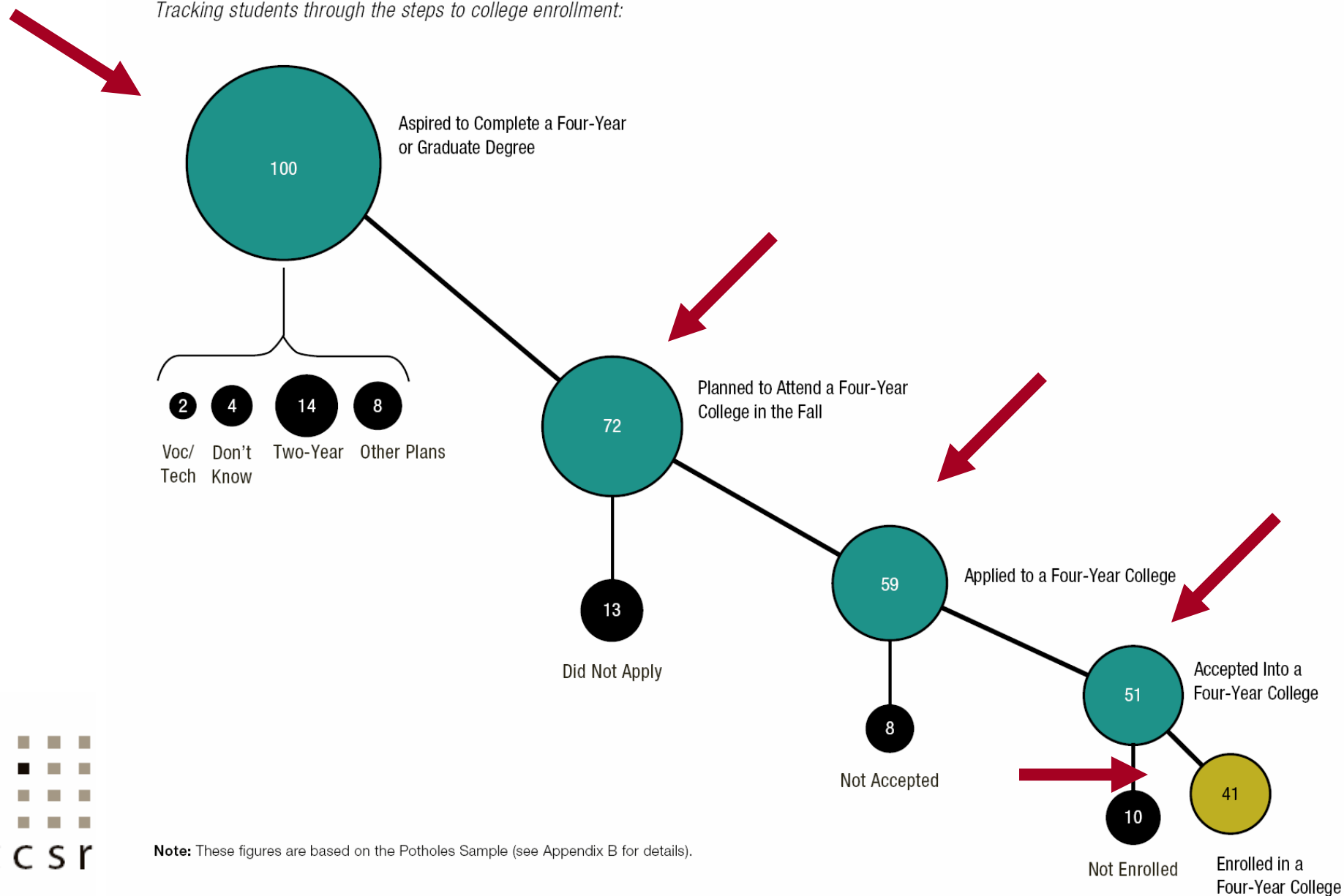


FIGURE 13

Of students who aspired to a bachelors degree, Latinos were the least likely to plan to attend and apply to a four-year college

Tracking students by race/ethnicity through the steps to college enrollment:

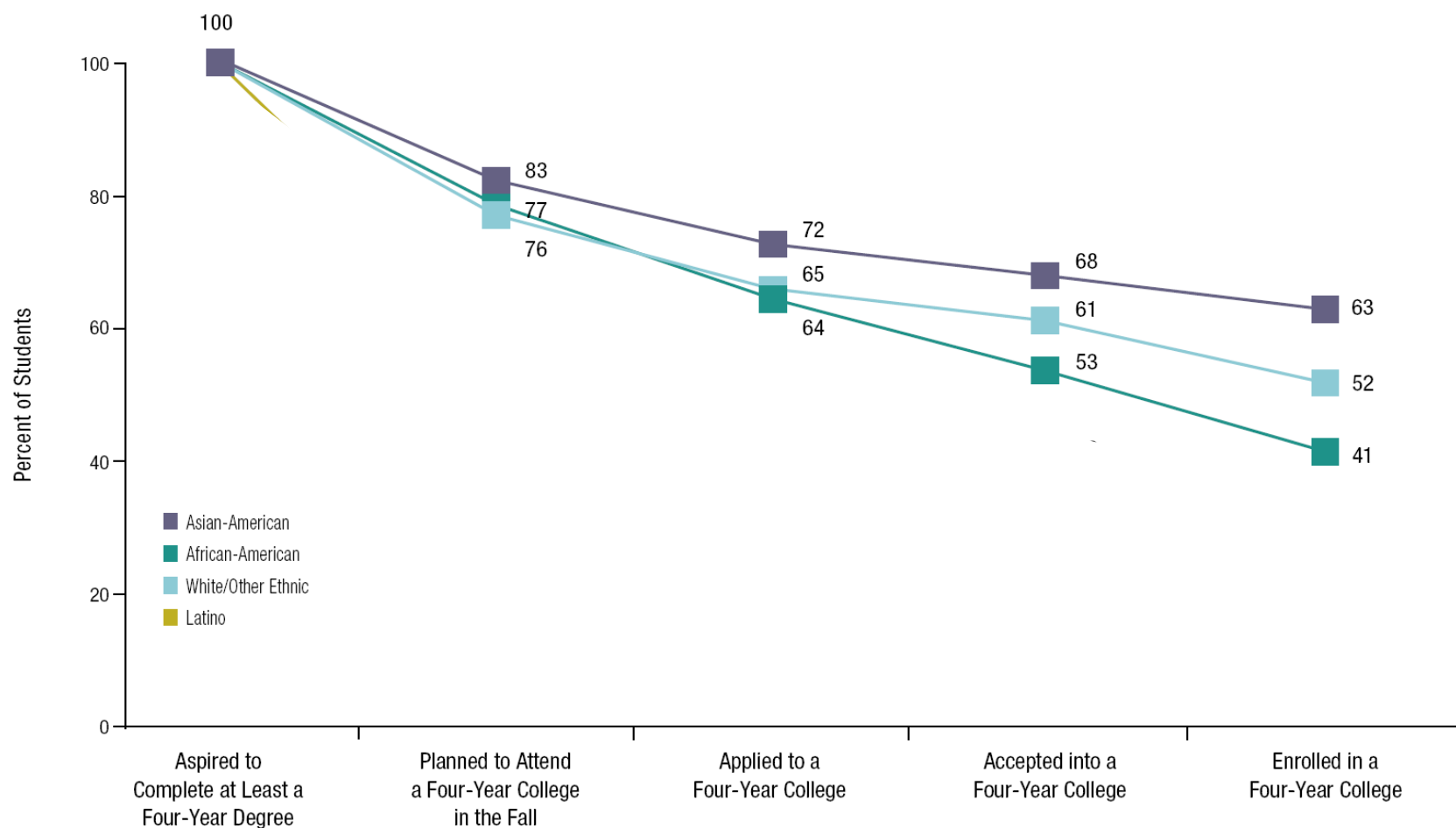
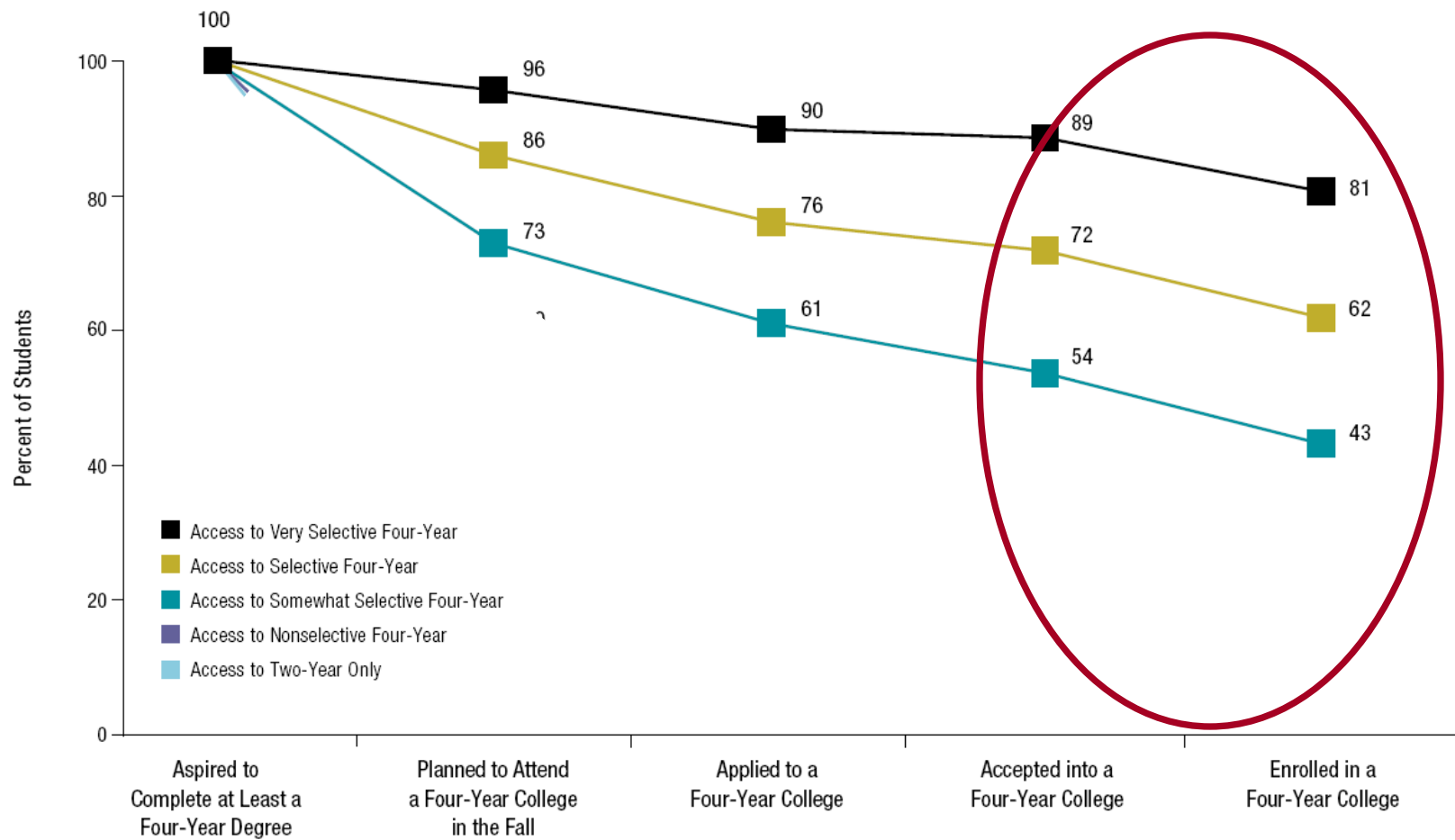


FIGURE 12

Only 61 percent of students qualified to attend a somewhat selective college, the majority of Illinois public universities, applied to a four-year college

Tracking students who aspired to complete a four-year degree by access category through the steps to college enrollment:



How can we improve college access for students?

- High school college-going culture
 - Teachers' assessment of college climate
- Indicators of students' effective participation in the financial aid process
 - Whether students submitted a FAFSA

Teachers were asked the extent to which they would agree that:

(strongly disagree to strongly agree)

- Teachers (in this high school) expect most students to go college.
- Teachers help students plan for college outside of class time.
- The curriculum is focused on helping students get ready for college.
- Teachers feel that it is a part of their job to prepare students to succeed in college.
- Many of our students are planning to go to college.

FIGURE 23

The most consistent school predictor of taking steps towards college enrollment—especially for students with lower academic qualifications—was whether their teachers reported that their school had a strong college climate

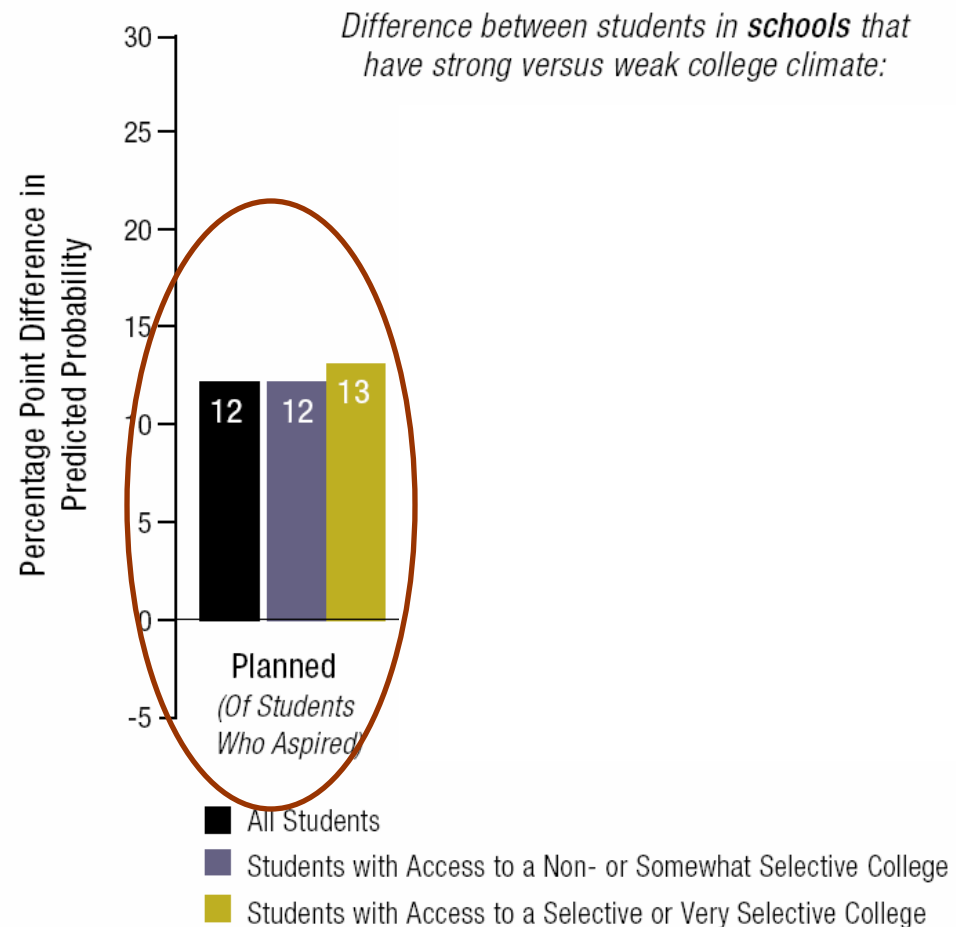
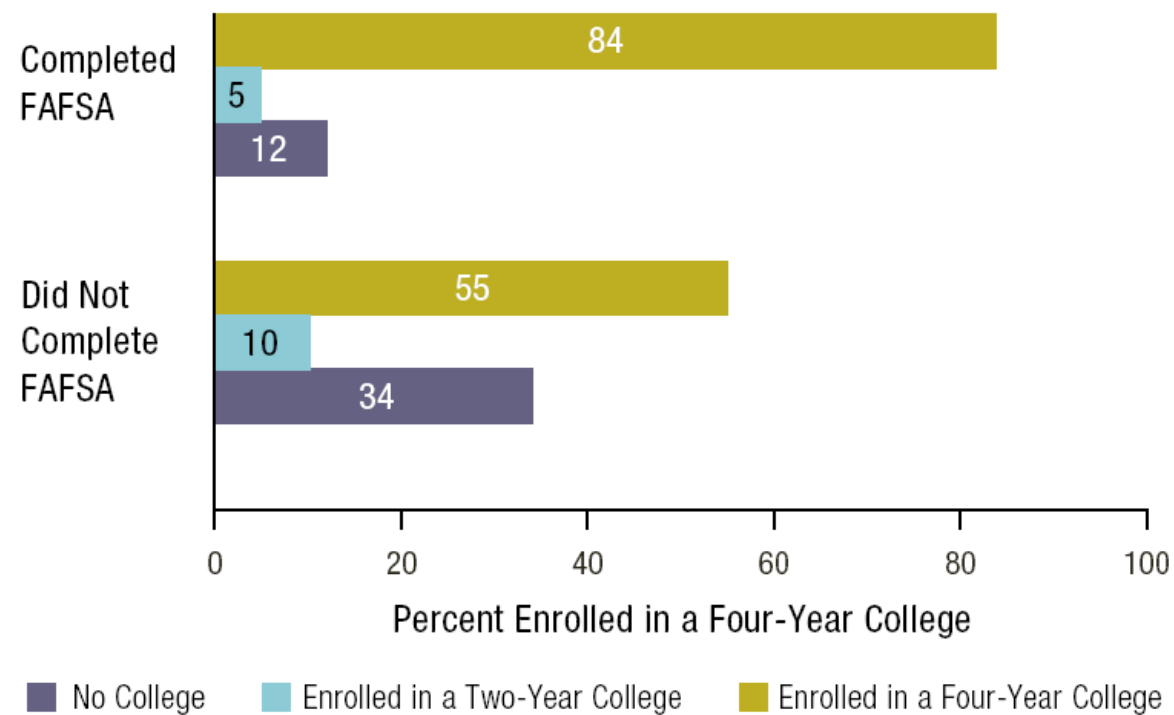


FIGURE 19

**Students who were accepted into a four-year college
were much more likely to enroll if they completed the FAFSA**

Difference in college enrollment by whether students completed their FAFSA among students who were accepted into a four-year college:



Conclusions

- Qualifications are not enough for students to have a high likelihood of enrolling four-year colleges.
- Students struggle throughout the college application process, even highly qualified students.
- Students have great difficulty managing the financial aid process. Failure to file a FAFSA places students at high risk of not enrolling.
- Having a strong college culture matters a great deal in guiding college enrollment and college match, especially for students with more marginal qualifications.